

1 CLAIMS

2 What is claimed is:

3

4 1. A method for time-stamping and managing electronic  
5 documents, comprising:6 obtaining respective time-stamp certificates for a  
7 plurality of documents, the documents and the certificates  
8 having associated identifiers;9 building a database of document identifiers and associated  
10 certificate identifiers; and

11 storing the documents and the certificates.

12

13 2. The method of Claim 1, further comprising chronologically  
14 linking related documents by date and time of certification.

15

16 3. The method of Claim 1, further comprising constructing  
17 chronologically ordered sets of documents in accordance with  
18 user specified relationships.

19

20 4. The method of Claim 1, further comprising:

21 reading textual description information pertaining to the  
22 documents; and23 associating the description information with the document  
24 identifiers in the database.

25

26 5. The method of Claim 1, further comprising associating a  
27 subject with the document identifiers in the database.

28

29 6. The method of Claim 3, further comprising associating a  
30 time-stamp with the document identifiers in the database.

31

32 7. The method of Claim 1, further comprising obtaining the  
33 certificates from an outside agency.

34

1 8. The method of Claim 1, further comprising soliciting from a  
2 user a document identifier for a document to certify.

3

4 9. The method of Claim 8, further comprising presenting a  
5 browse mode to a user for selection of the document to certify.

6

7 10. The method of Claim 8, further comprising soliciting from a  
8 user a description of the document to certify.

9

10 11. The method of Claim 8, further comprising soliciting from a  
11 user a subject to associate with the document to certify.

12

13 12. The method of Claim 11, further comprising presenting a  
14 browse mode to a user for selection of the subject.

15

16 13. The method of Claim 12, further comprising creating a new  
17 subject in response to user input.

18

19 14. The method of Claim 8, further comprising soliciting from a  
20 user a thread identifier to associate with the document.

21

22 15. The method of Claim 14, further comprising presenting a  
23 browse mode to a user for selection of the thread.

24

25 16. The method of Claim 15, further comprising creating a new  
26 thread in response to user input.

27

28 17. A system for time-stamping and managing electronic  
29 documents, comprising:

30 a document manager configured and arranged to generate  
31 requests for time-stamp certificates for electronic documents,  
32 store the documents and corresponding time-stamp certificates,  
33 and generate document identifiers and certificate identifiers  
34 that respectively correspond to the documents and time-stamp  
35 certificates;

1 a certificate generator coupled to the document manager,  
2 and configured and arranged to generate time-stamp certificates  
3 in response to the requests from the document manager; and  
4 a database coupled to the document manager and including  
5 associations of document identifiers and certificate identifiers  
6 generated by the document manager.

7  
8 18. The system of Claim 17, further comprising a certification  
9 interface coupled to the document manager and further coupled to  
10 the certificate generator via a network, and configured and  
11 arranged to transmit the requests from the document manager to  
12 the certificate generator and the time-stamp certificates from  
13 the certificate generator to the document manager.

14  
15 19. The system of Claim 17, wherein the database further  
16 includes associations of subjects with the document identifiers.

17  
18 20. The system of Claim 17, wherein the database further  
19 includes one or more threads indicating chronological  
20 relationships between the documents.

21  
22 21. The system of Claim 17, wherein the database further  
23 includes:

24 associations of subjects with the document identifiers;  
25 one or more threads indicating chronological relationships  
26 between the documents:  
27 textual descriptions of the documents; and  
28 time-stamps for the documents.